MARVEL
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MARVEL PSR+
RICHARD K. MORGAN • BILL SIENKIEWICZ • GORAN PARLOV
BLACK WIDOW
Now t
call a womar
LAND
Ryan
J-Po

Part 3: Now That's What I Call A Woman

Previously:

The Black Widow. Russian intelligence agent, KGB-recruited. A Soviet weapon of the Cold War. Legend of the covert Moscow espionage academy known as the Red Room. Later, a defector to the U.S. and a freelance agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.

Natasha Romanova was retired and living happily in Arizona when a Russian assassin comes calling and pulls her back into the spy game. She fights him off, but he dies without revealing the name of his boss.

She wasn't the only one marked for death. The other targets were also women…and one of them was a former KGB deep-cover operative. Stefanya Melnikova was living out her days in Alabama as Stacy Matheson when she was shot dead.

With the help of Phil Dexter, an old ally from her S.H.I.E.L.D. days, Natasha drives to Birmingham to investigate Stacy's murder.

Along the way, Natasha rescues a young teen hitchhiker named Sally Anne from some unsavory truckers. Sally Anne was deposited in a safe-house until Natasha could return.

In Alabama, Natasha and Phil discover two important facts: 1) Stacy was pregnant when she was killed; and 2) she was taking 2 types of medication: military-issue painkillers and an unknown substance called Medusagen.

The mysterious man who wants Natasha dead sends out two new agents to finish the job. Max and Kestrel are freelance operatives working for a powerful American organization known as North. The two agents track Natasha and Phil down to Stacy's house and send in a SWAT team.

Guns blazing, Natasha and Phil cut a swath through the SWAT team to escape, but not before the Black Widow collapses, shot in the gut…

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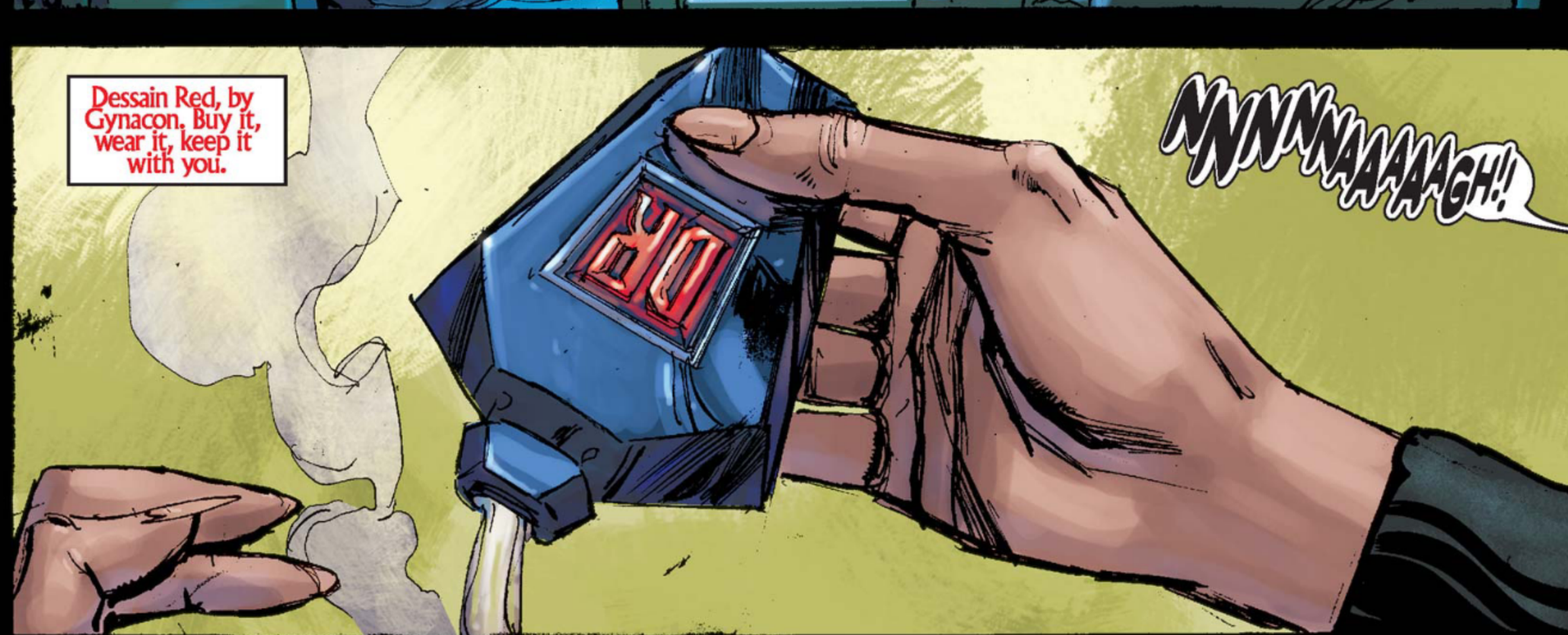
DR

Dessain Red...
Men will want you...
SO WHERE THE HELL IS SHE NOW?
SOUTHEAN CARIBBEAN

Men will seek you out...
ANYTHING AT ALL, THE SLIGHTEST TRACE, I WANT TO KNOW ABOUT IT.
ALABAMA

Men will remember your face...
I UNDERSTAND PERFECTLY, SIR. WE'RE DOING EVERYTHING WE CAN.
NATALYA ROMANOVA
WASHINGTON, D.C.


Dessain Red, by Gynacon. Buy it, wear it, keep it with you.
NNNNAAAAGH!!

YOU SURE THIS IS ALL THE DISINFECTANT WE'VE GOT?
IT'S SIX-FIFTEEN IN THE MORNING, NAT.

WHERE AM I GOING TO BUY MEDICAL SUPPLIES AROUND HERE?

NEVER MIND, IT'S ONLY A *FLESH WOUND*. I'M *DONE*. LET'S GET *BACK* ON THE *ROAD*.

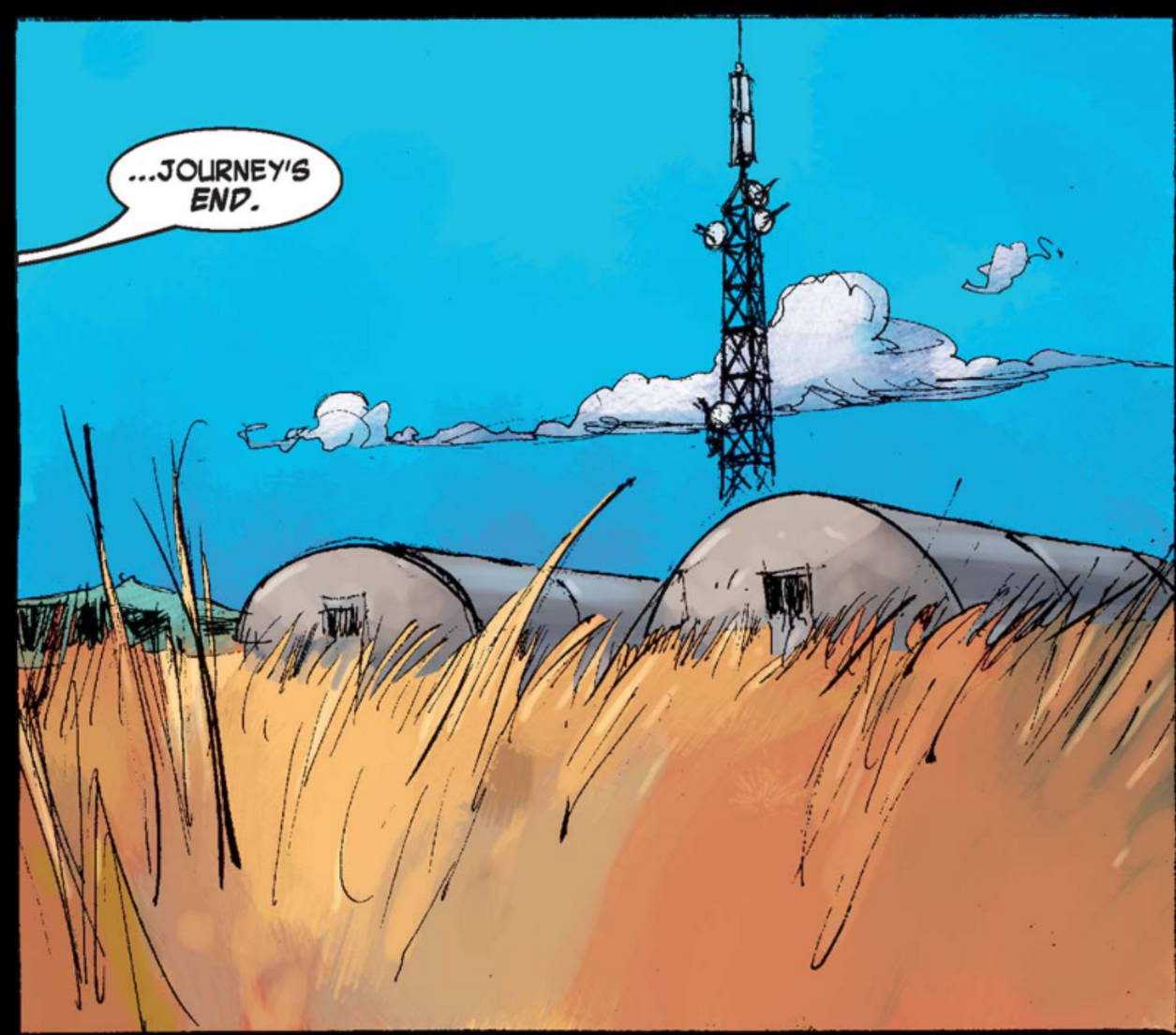
FRANKLY, CAPTAIN, THIS IS *UNBELIEVABLE. NINE MEN?* NINE OF YOUR *HAND-PICKED TEAM* DEAD.

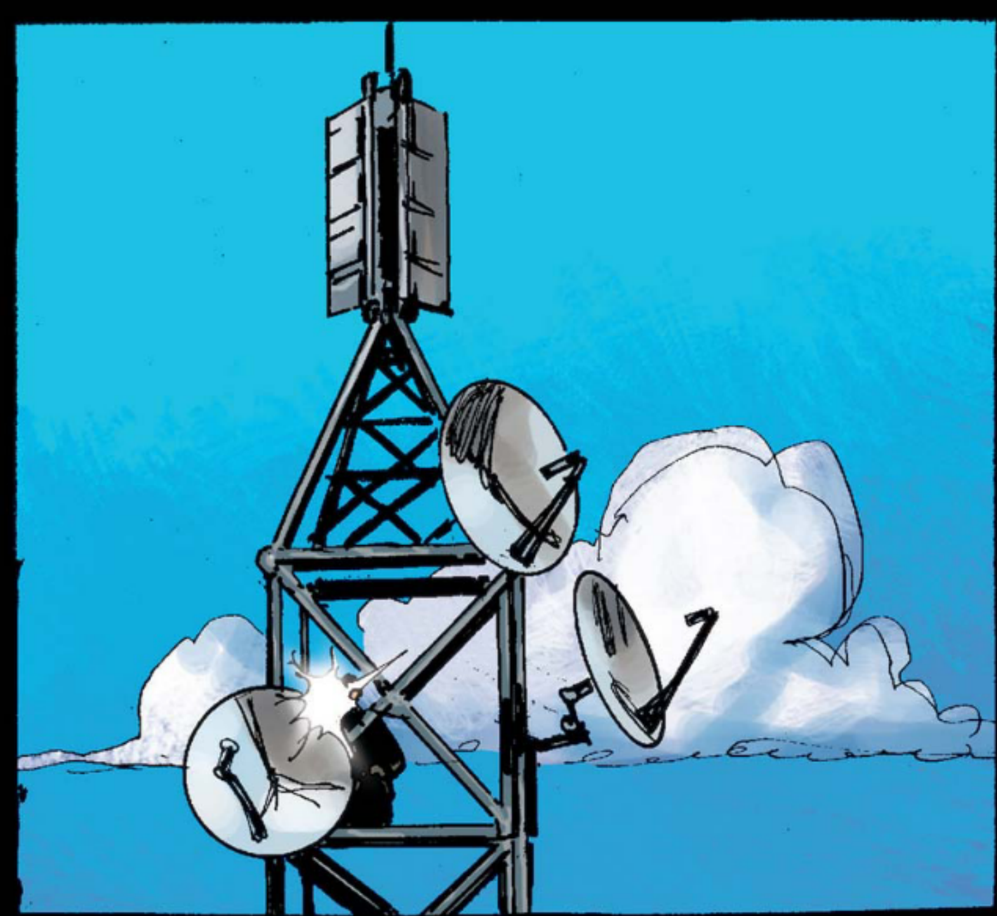
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A WOMAN HERE. *ONE WOMAN.*

SHE WASN'T ACTING *ALONE*, SIR.

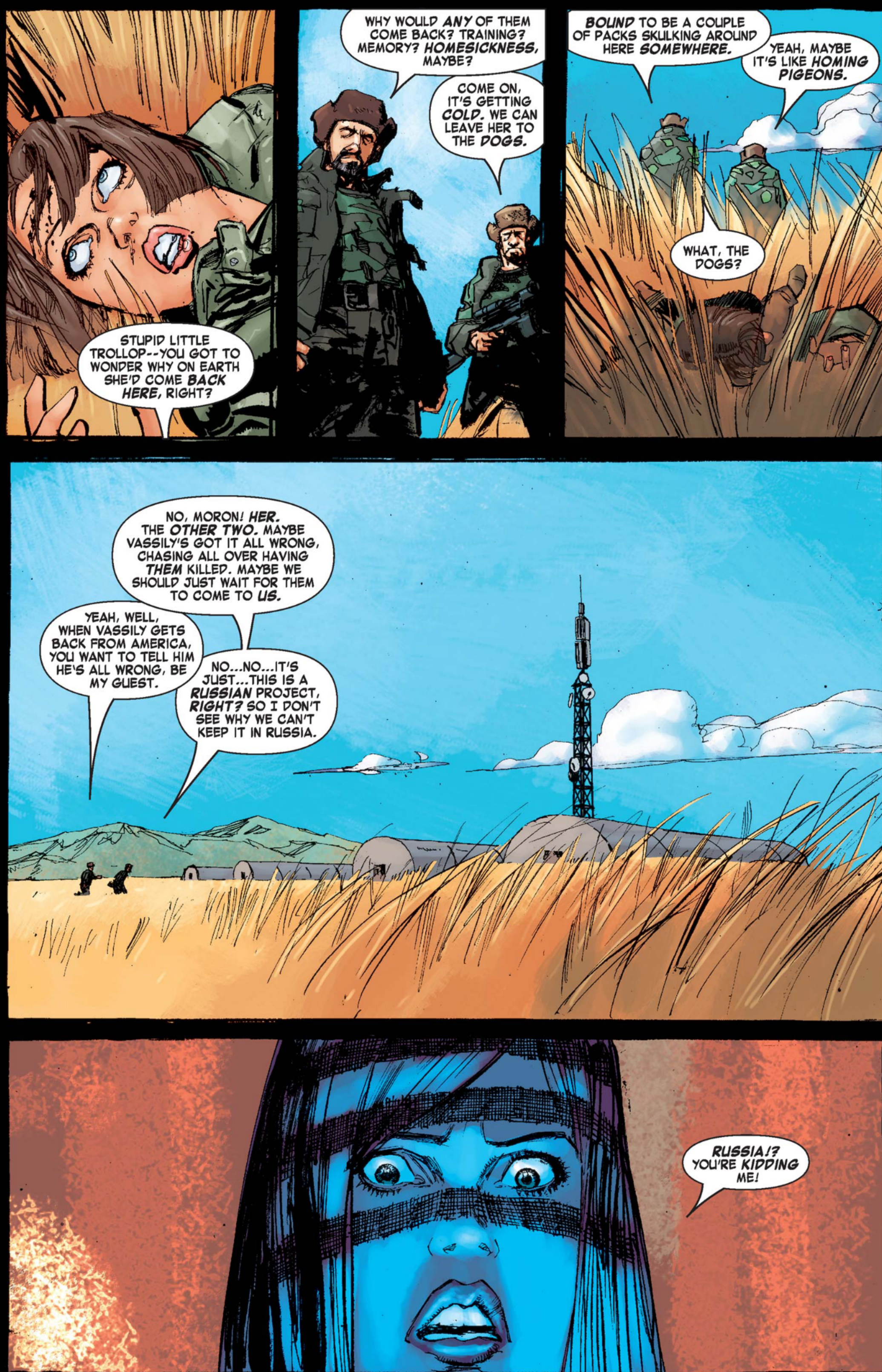
OH, GREAT. SO EXACTLY HOW MANY OF THESE PSYCHOS *ARE* THERE, THEN?

SO...
SOMEWHERE SOUTHEAST OF THE URALS

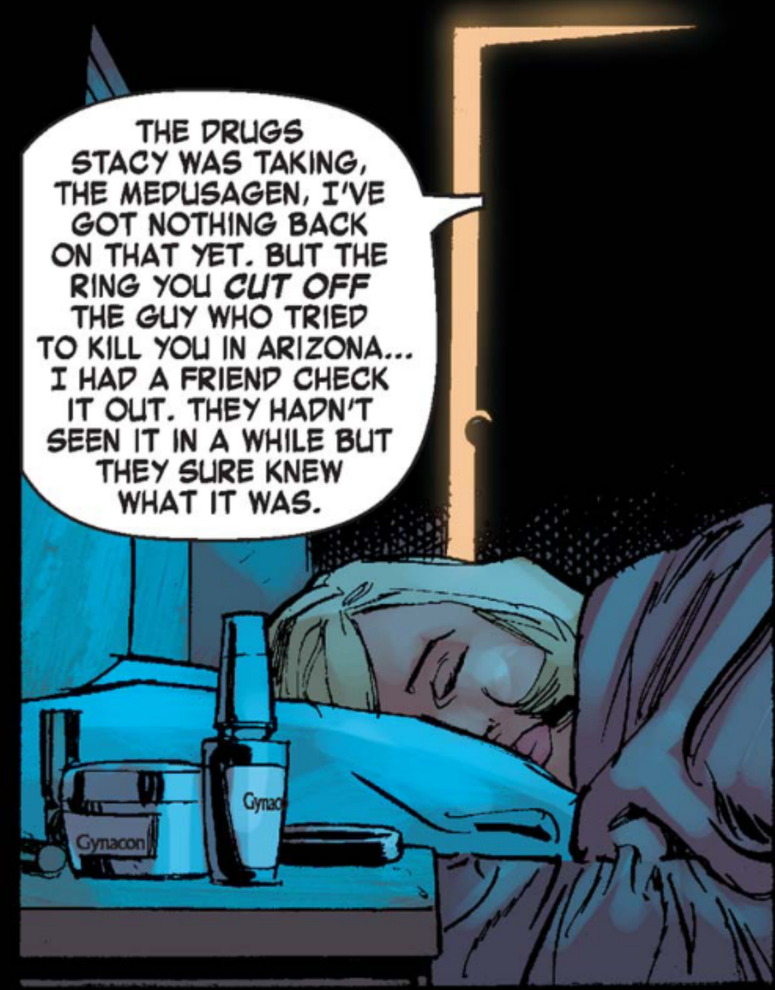

...JOURNEY'S END.



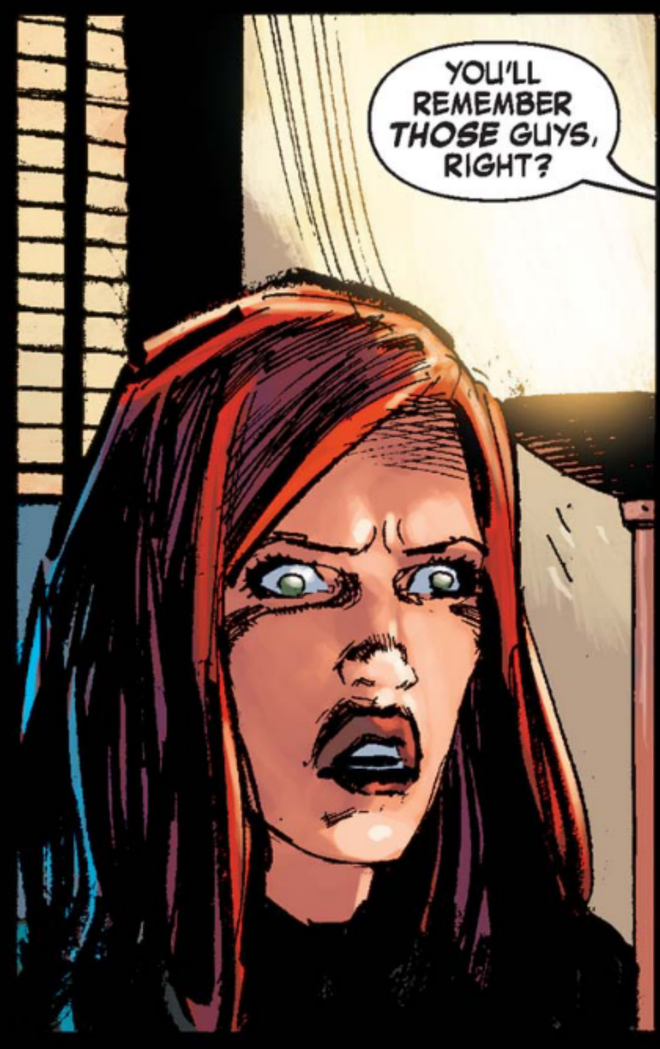
THUKAKKKK

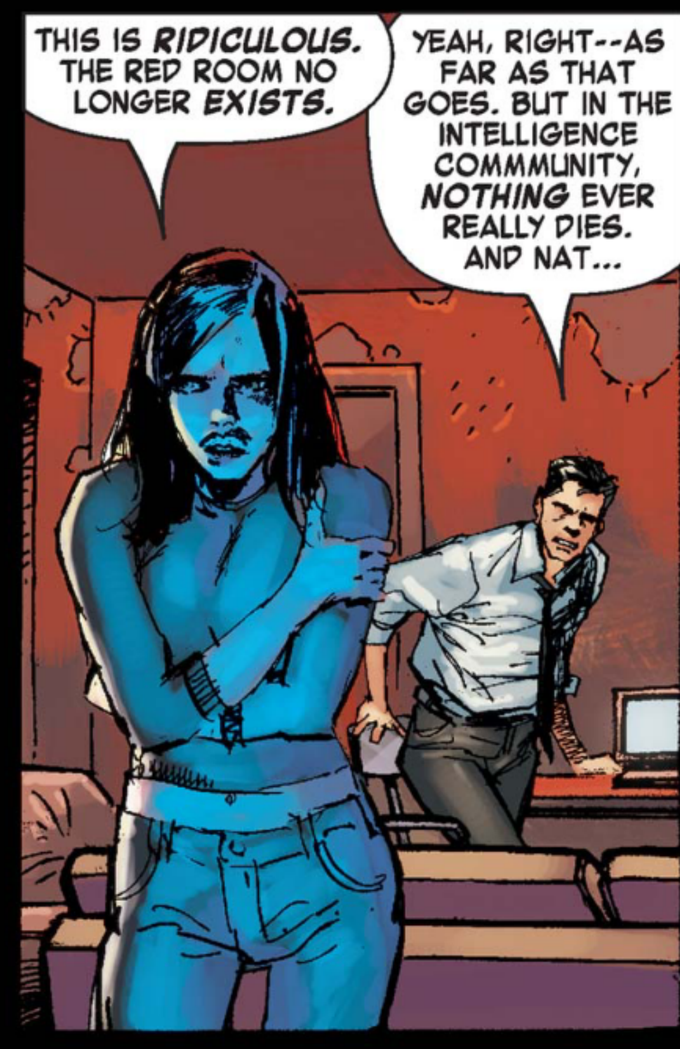

STUPID LITTLE TROLLOP--YOU GOT TO WONDER WHY ON EARTH SHE'D COME BACK HERE, RIGHT?
WHY WOULD ANY OF THEM COME BACK? TRAINING? MEMORY? HOMESICKNESS, MAYBE?
COME ON, IT'S GETTING COLD. WE CAN LEAVE HER TO THE DOGS.
BOUND TO BE A COUPLE OF PACKS SKULKING AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE.
YEAH, MAYBE IT'S LIKE HOMING PIGEONS.
WHAT, THE DOGS?
NO, MORON! HER. THE OTHER TWO. MAYBE VASSILY'S GOT IT ALL WRONG, CHASING ALL OVER HAVING THEM KILLED. MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST WAIT FOR THEM TO COME TO US.
YEAH, WELL, WHEN VASSILY GETS BACK FROM AMERICA, YOU WANT TO TELL HIM HE'S ALL WRONG, BE MY GUEST.
NO...NO...IT'S JUST...THIS IS A RUSSIAN PROJECT, RIGHT? SO I DON'T SEE WHY WE CAN'T KEEP IT IN RUSSIA.
RUSSIA!? YOU'RE KIDDING ME!

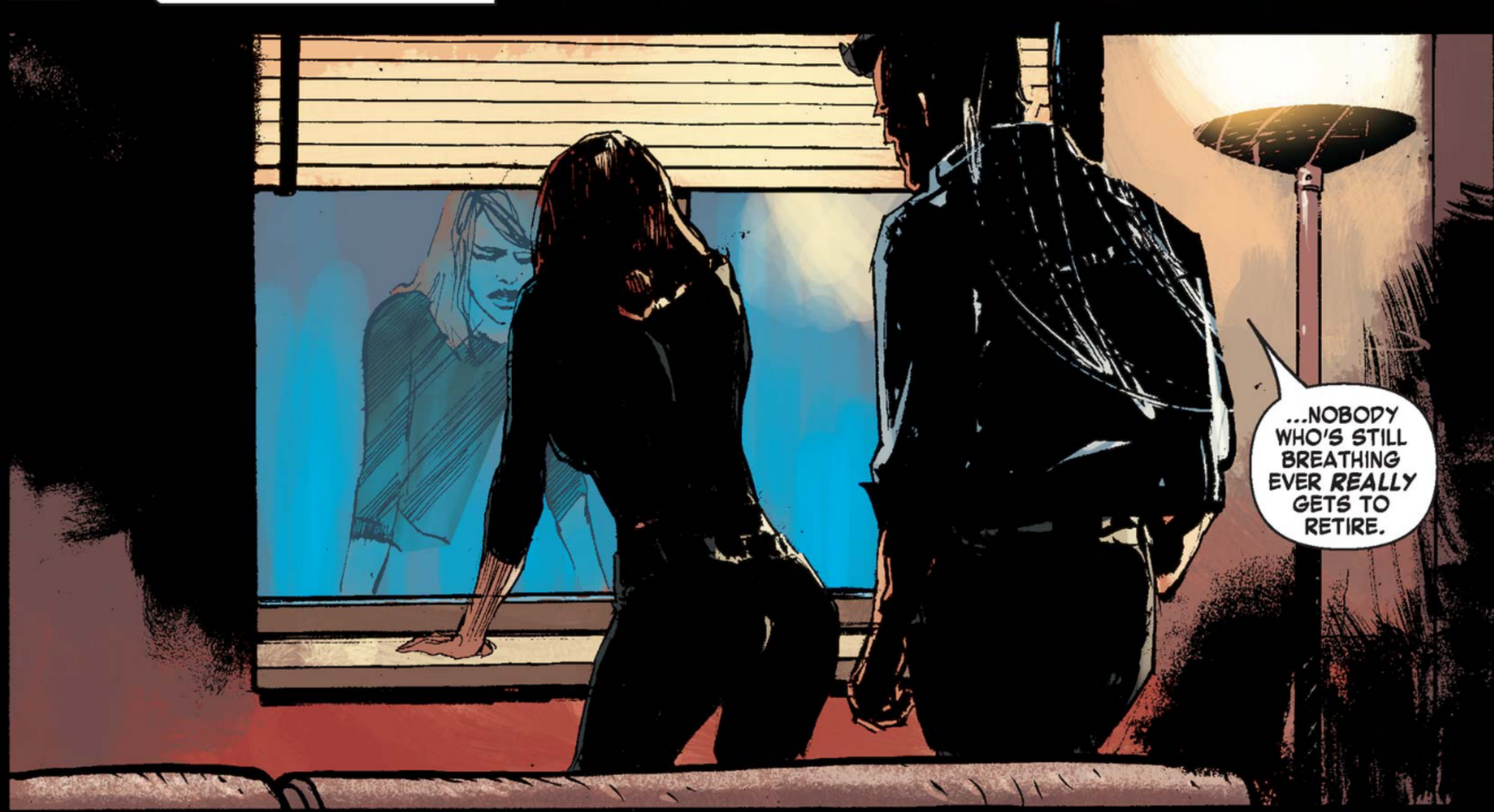
SSH! KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN. YOU'RE GOING TO WAKE SALLY ANNE. AND I DIDN'T SAY *RUSSIA*, I SAID THE *SOVIET UNION*. THIS IS *ANCIENT HISTORY*, NAT.
OKLAHOMA

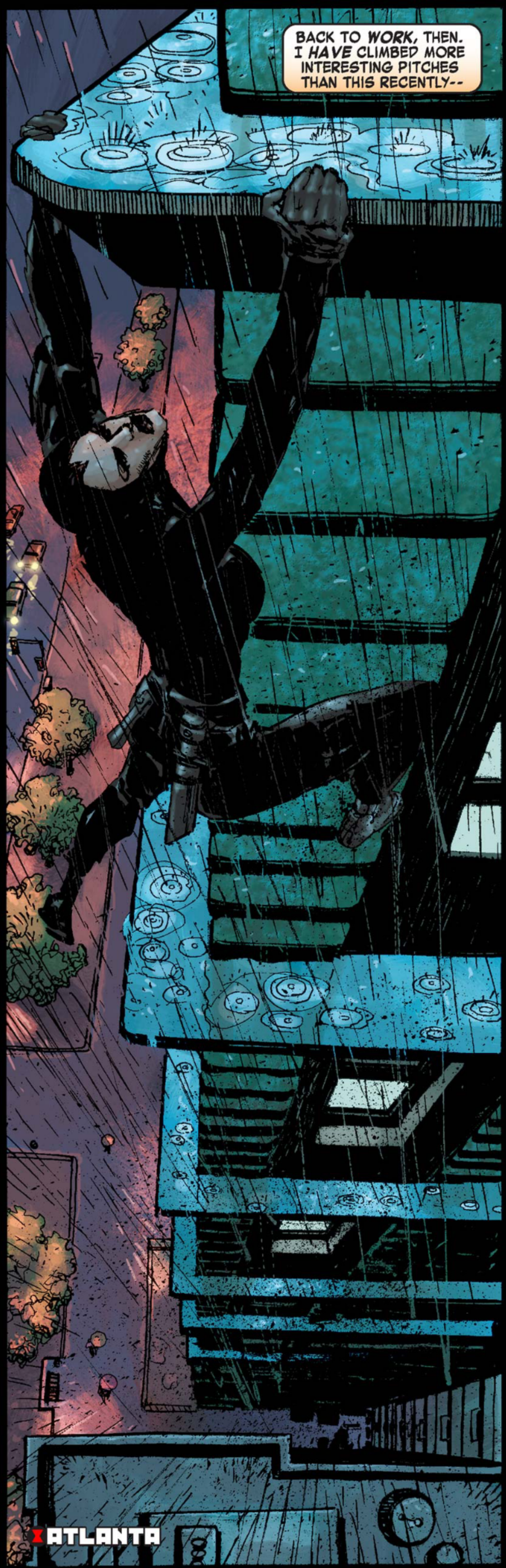

THE DRUGS STACY WAS TAKING, THE MEDUSAGEN, I'VE GOT NOTHING BACK ON THAT YET. BUT THE RING YOU *CUT OFF* THE GUY WHO TRIED TO KILL YOU IN ARIZONA... I HAD A FRIEND CHECK IT OUT. THEY HADN'T SEEN IT IN A WHILE BUT THEY SURE KNEW WHAT IT WAS.
Gynacon

THIS IS *SOVIET BLACK OPS* JEWELRY. ONLY GUYS EVER GOT TO WEAR IT WERE *ASSASSINS* WORKING OUT OF *THE RED ROOM*.


YOU'LL REMEMBER *THOSE* GUYS, RIGHT?

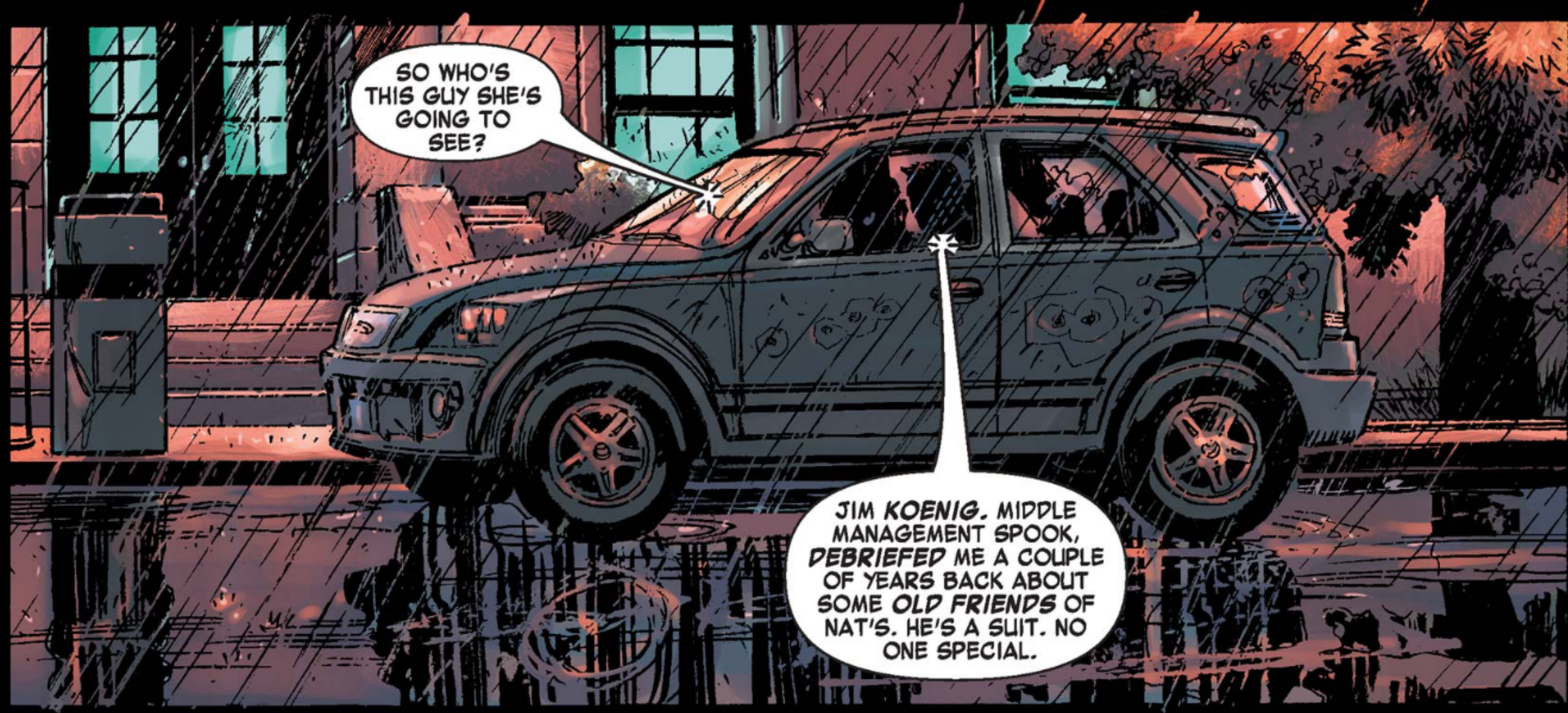

THIS IS *RIDICULOUS*. THE RED ROOM NO LONGER *EXISTS*.
YEAH, RIGHT--AS FAR AS THAT GOES. BUT IN THE INTELLIGENCE COMMMUNITY, *NOTHING* EVER REALLY DIES. AND NAT...


...NOBODY WHO'S STILL BREATHING EVER *REALLY* GETS TO RETIRE.


BACK TO *WORK*, THEN. I *HAVE* CLIMBED MORE INTERESTING PITCHES THAN THIS RECENTLY--
ATLANTA

--BUT NOT *ALONE* AND NOT *WITHOUT ROPES*. AND NOT IN THE *DARK*. AND THE RAIN.
AND CERTAINLY NOT WHERE I HAD TO BE *QUIET* WHEN I REACHED THE TOP.
AND IN CASE YOU'RE *WONDERING*: DON'T I MISS ALL THIS? THE ANSWER IS *NO*--
YKLINK

KLAK!
--NOT ANY OF IT.
MHMMMPHPHUPH!
BE QUIET. I'M NOT HERE TO HURT YOU OR YOUR HUSBAND, BUT IF YOU SCREAM, I WILL KILL YOU. DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?


SO WHO'S THIS GUY SHE'S GOING TO SEE?
JIM KOENIG. MIDDLE MANAGEMENT SPOOK, DEBRIEFED ME A COUPLE OF YEARS BACK ABOUT SOME OLD FRIENDS OF NAT'S. HE'S A SUIT. NO ONE SPECIAL.

"NO ONE SPECIAL". SURE. THAT'S WHY SHE HAS TO GET IN THROUGH A LOCKED TWENTY-STORY WINDOW INSTEAD OF JUST KNOCKING ON THE FRONT DOOR.
WELL, SEE, NAT AND I ARE BOTH RETIRED...
...WE DON'T GET TO USE THE FRONT DOOR ANYMORE.

KRISTA BABY, THAT YOU?
NO...
IT'S NOT KRISTA, BABY.
WHO THE HELL IS KRISTA?

THERE'LL BE TIME TO TALK ABOUT *KRISTA BABY* LATER. RIGHT NOW--

--I'VE GOT *A FEW OTHER QUESTIONS.*

SO LOOK, WHY DID YOU GUYS SAVE ME FROM THOSE TRUCKERS ANYWAY?
AH, WELL, *AHEM,* I WASN'T GOING TO JUST *STAND BY* AND JUST WATCH, WAS I?
WHY NOT--

--MY MOM DID.
NEAR ENOUGH, ANYWAY, WHEN HER *BOYFRIEND* STARTED...

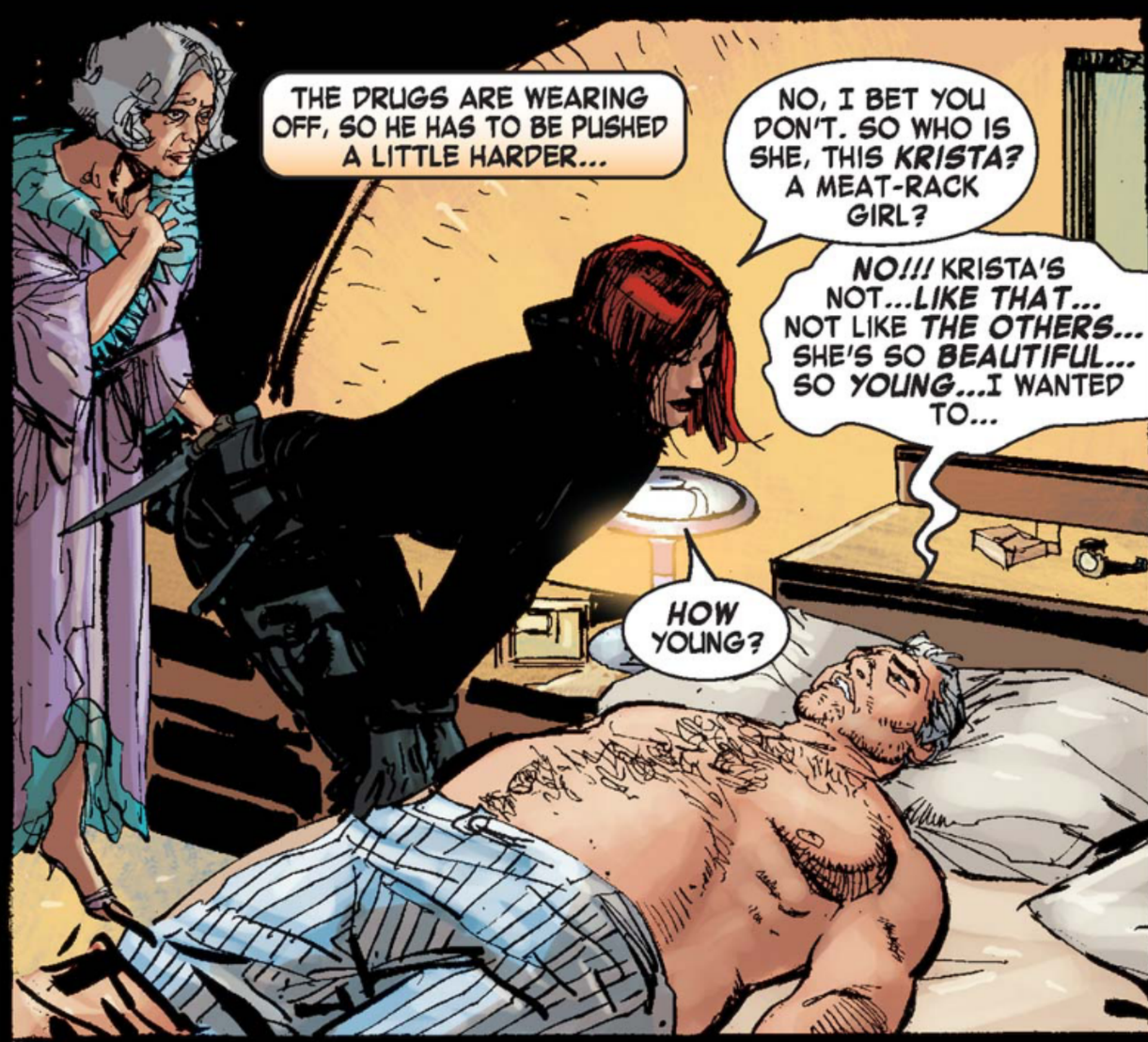
...GOT ANY OF THAT *WHISKY* TO SPARE?

SO LET'S GET THIS STRAIGHT. THE RED ROOM IS BACK IN BUSINESS, TRADING AS 2R. THEY'VE GOT AGENTS HERE IN THE U.S., AND A U.S. GOVERNMENT LIAISON, THIS GUY FERRIS. BUT YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT 2R ACTUALLY DOES?
NO...I...THEY NEVER... WOULDN'T...FERRIS KNOWS... TOLD ME...GATHER DATA, THAT'S ALL. ASK ALL THE...OLD HANDS....WHAT THEY KNEW.

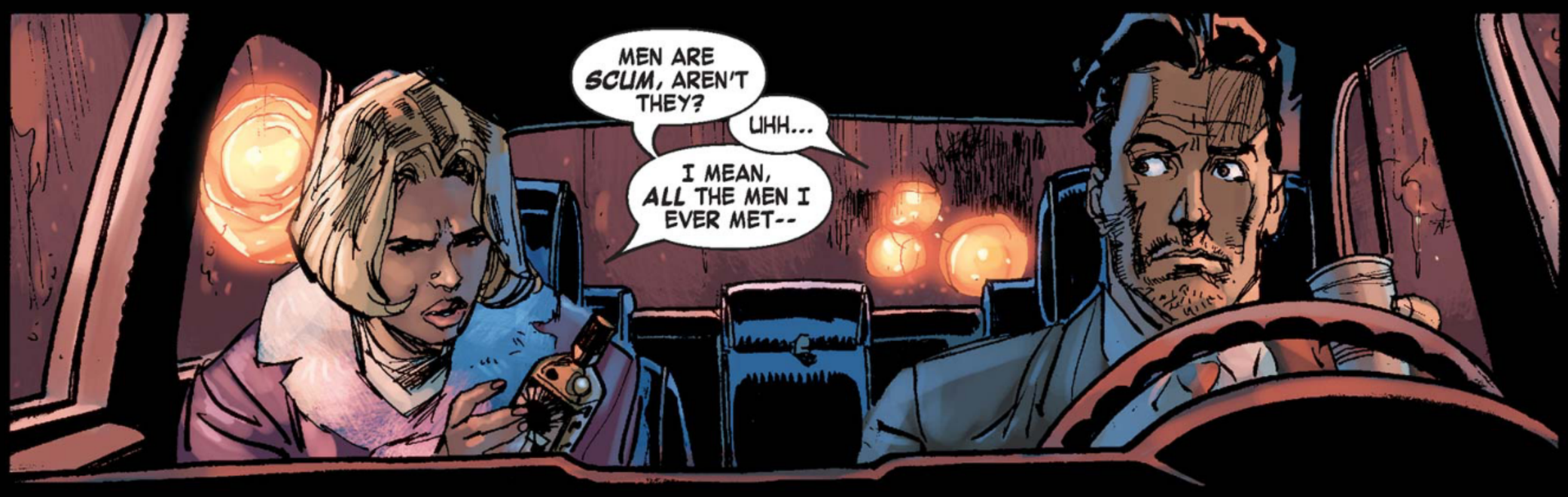
THE OLD HANDS? AND YOU NEVER CAME TO ME?

NO...FERRIS...TOLD ME... NO...LEAVE HER. NOT...OUR PROBLEM...LEAVE WELL-ENOUGH ALONE...WON'T LIVE...MUCH LONGER ANYWAY...DOESN'T MATTER...

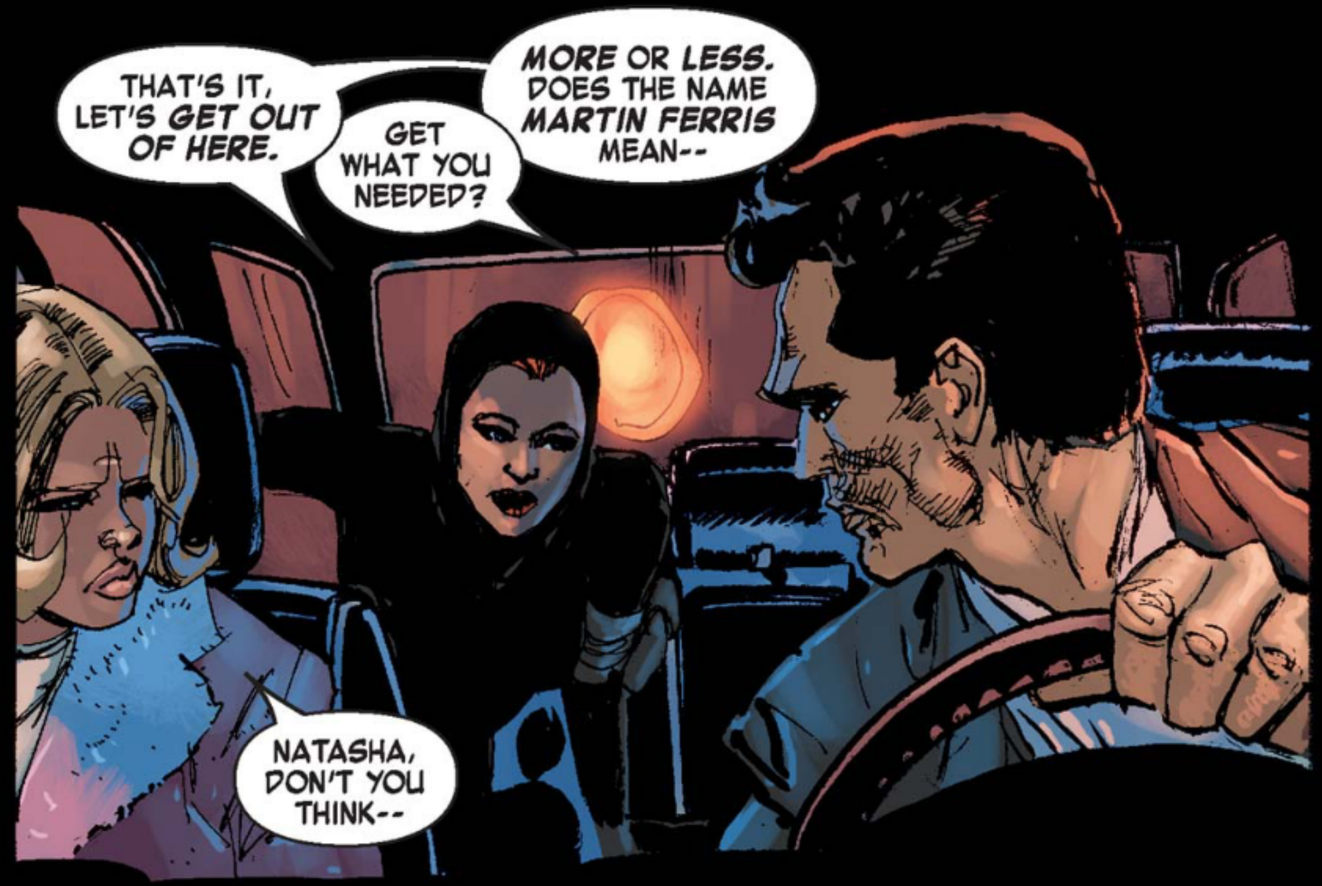
SO NOW WHY DON'T YOU TELL US ALL ABOUT KRISTA BABY?
NO...PLEASE... DON'T MAKE ME... PLEASE...DON'T WANT TO...


THE DRUGS ARE WEARING OFF, SO HE HAS TO BE PUSHED A LITTLE HARDER...
NO, I BET YOU DON'T. SO WHO IS SHE, THIS KRISTA? A MEAT-RACK GIRL?
NO!!! KRISTA'S NOT...LIKE THAT... NOT LIKE THE OTHERS... SHE'S SO BEAUTIFUL... SO YOUNG...I WANTED TO...
HOW YOUNG?

...ONLY SEVENTEEN...
...SO BEAUTIFUL... WANTED TO LOOK AFTER HER...TO LOVE HER...


MEN ARE SCUM, AREN'T THEY?
UHH...
I MEAN, ALL THE MEN I EVER MET--

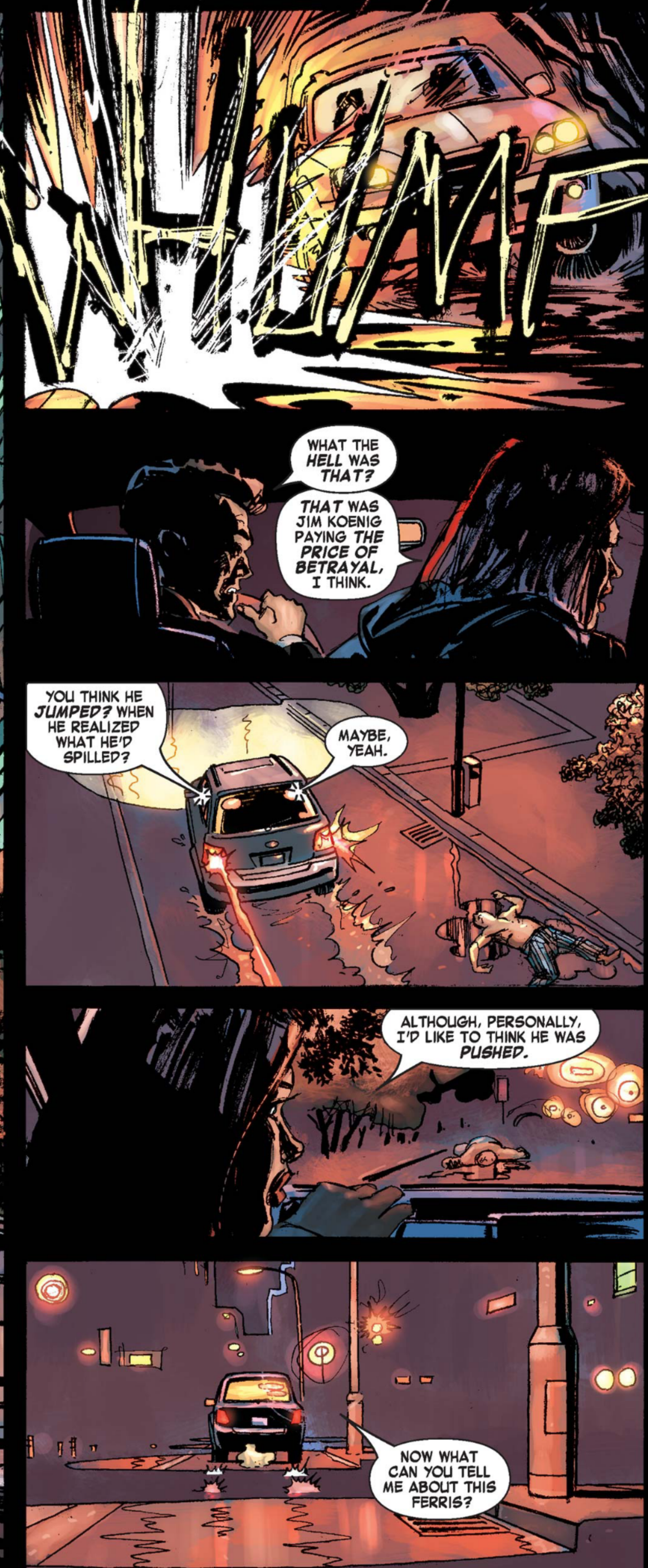
TAK TAK


THAT'S IT, LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.
GET WHAT YOU NEEDED?
MORE OR LESS. DOES THE NAME MARTIN FERRIS MEAN--
NATASHA, DON'T YOU THINK--

WHOA, YOU'VE BEEN DRINKING?
A LITTLE, YEAH, LOOK--

YOU GAVE HER WHISKY?
UH...
NATASHA, DON'T YOU THINK ALL MEN ARE SCUM?
RIGHT NOW? YES, I THINK RIGHT NOW I DO.

KK-RRESHSHH!
AAAAAAAGH!!


WHAM!
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?
THAT WAS JIM KOENIG PAYING THE PRICE OF BETRAYAL, I THINK.
YOU THINK HE JUMPED? WHEN HE REALIZED WHAT HE'D SPILLED?
MAYBE, YEAH.
ALTHOUGH, PERSONALLY, I'D LIKE TO THINK HE WAS PUSHED.
NOW WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THIS FERRIS?

SO NOW SHE'S IN ATLANTA?
WELL, NO, PROBABLY NOT BY NOW. BUT SHE WAS LAST NIGHT, JUDGING BY THE DAMAGE.
YOU'RE SURE?
WASHINGTON, D.C.

OH COME ON, FURY. WHO ELSE DO YOU KNOW WHO CAN SCALE A BUILDING LIKE THAT?

ALL RIGHT, DON'T ANSWER THAT. THE LESS I KNOW ABOUT YOUR CREW OF MASKED WEIRDOS, THE BETTER. BUT KOENIG IS DEAD, THE WIDOW KILLED HIM, AND I'M FRESH OUT OF LEADS.

IT'S TIME FOR SOME INTERAGENCY COOPERATION HERE.

WE'RE LOOKING, TOO. I'LL HAVE SOMEONE CALL YOU IF--
DON'T TRY TO BLOW ME OFF, FURY. YOU'LL BE SORRY YOU--

SORRY? SORRY? I'M ALREADY SORRY.

I'M SORRY THIS ADMINISTRATION SEES FIT TO LET SCUM LIKE YOU OPERATE IN THE FIRST PLACE. I'M SORRY AN ABOMINATION LIKE THE NORTH INSTITUTE WAS EVER PERMITTED BIRTH.

I'M SORRY I CAN'T PUT A BULLET THROUGH BOTH OF YOU RIGHT NOW. IF YOU EVER TOUCH ME AGAIN, HUNTER, I'LL BREAK YOU IN HALF AND CALL IT SELF-DEFENSE, DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?

SO I GUESS THAT'S A NO ON THE INTERAGENCY COOPERATION, THEN?

YOU JUST HAD ALL THE COOPERATION YOU'RE GOING TO GET OUT OF ME.

WELL. THAT WENT WELL.
SLAM

YEAH, THANKS, KESTREL.
FOR WHAT?
FOR STOPPING THAT FROM GOING DOWN. I THINK I WOULD HAVE KILLED HIM.

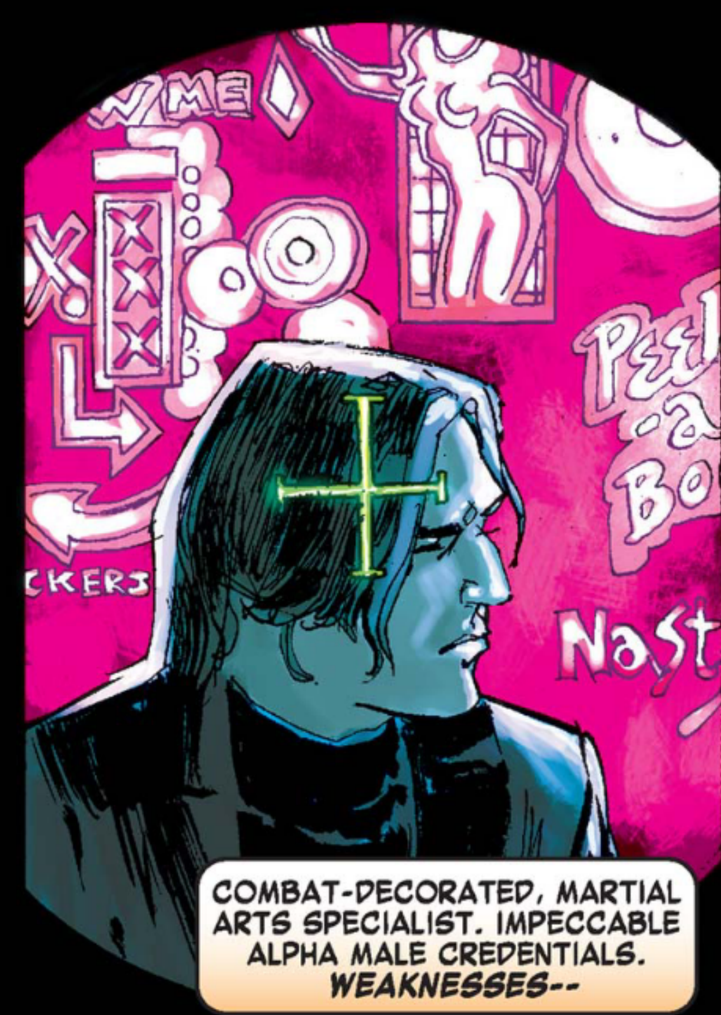
NOT GOOD FOR YOUR CAREER PROSPECTS, MAX. EVEN THE NSA DOESN'T LIKE SLAUGHTER IN THE RANKS.
LOOK, FORGET FURY. HE'S A DINOSAUR. ANOTHER FIVE YEARS, HE WON'T RECOGNIZE THE WORLD HE'S LIVING IN.
FROM WHAT THEY'RE SAYING UP AT NORTH, NEITHER WILL ANYONE ELSE. THERE'S NO ROAD BACK FROM WHAT WE'RE DOING, KESTREL.

Carolina
MOTEL
VACANCY
FREE ROOMS
CABLE TV
MOTEL
EVERYTHING'S CHANGING, NAT.
NORTH CAROLINA

NEW FACES, NEW WAYS OF DOING STUFF. EXTERNAL LIAISONS, THINK TANKS, BRIGHT YOUNG THIN--
YEAH, FERRIS...
PHIL. STICK TO THE POINT. FERRIS.

FILTERED THROUGH PHIL AND THE WHISKY, I GET SOME SENSE OF MY TARGET...

MARTIN FERRIS. EX-WEST POINT.
EX-SPECIAL FORCES.
EX-PENTAGON ADVISORY STAFF.
EXISTS NOW IN SOME GRAY AREA UNDER THE NSA UMBRELLA.


COMBAT-DECORATED, MARTIAL ARTS SPECIALIST. IMPECCABLE ALPHA MALE CREDENTIALS. WEAKNESSES--

--THE USUAL.

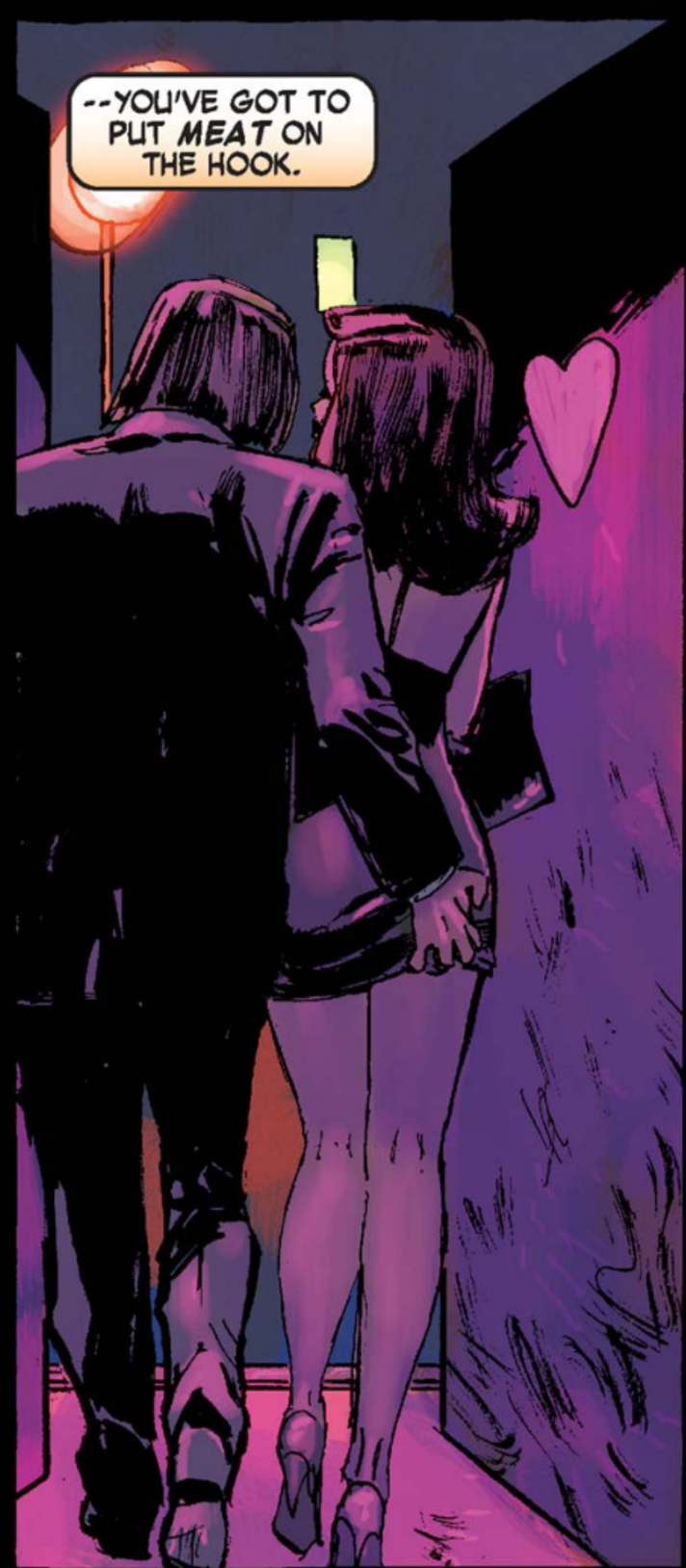
I DON'T LIKE THIS, NAT.
YEAH, WELL, REST ASSURED, YOUR DISLIKE FOR IT IS ABOUT A TENTH THE STRENGTH OF MINE.

DRESSED TO KILL'S A STRANGE EXPRESSION.

HEELS YOU CAN BARELY WALK IN, LET ALONE RUN. SKIN EXPOSED ALL OVER, REGARDLESS OF WEATHER. A LOOK THAT SAYS "TAKE ME I'M YOURS."

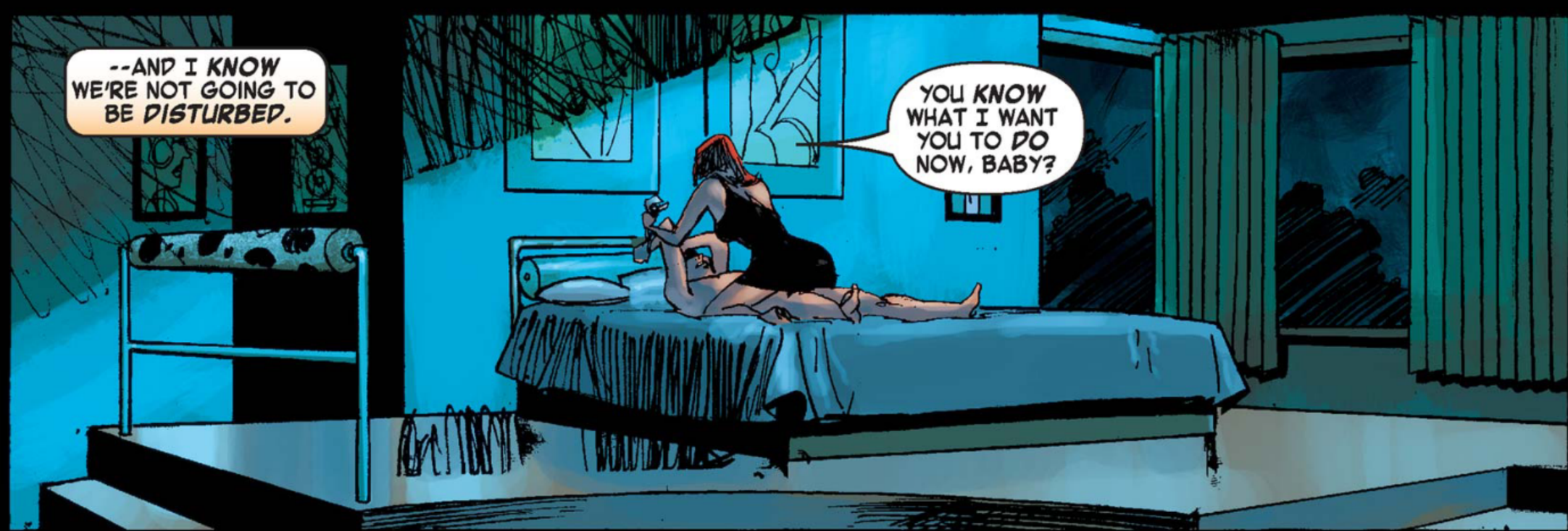
DRESSED TO BE KILLED, MORE LIKE.
WASHINGTON, D.C.

BUT IF YOU WANT TO REEL IN A SHARK--


--YOU'VE GOT TO PUT MEAT ON THE HOOK.

FERRIS ISN'T MARRIED LIKE KOENIG. NOT WEAK ENOUGH TO WANT TO HAVE HIS CAKE AND EAT IT, TOO.

OH, BABY, YOU ARE HOT.
OR MAYBE HE'S JUST NOT OLD ENOUGH YET. EITHER WAY, HIS PLACE IS EMPTY--


--AND I KNOW WE'RE NOT GOING TO BE DISTURBED.
YOU KNOW WHAT I WANT YOU TO DO NOW, BABY?

OHHH, YEAHHH...

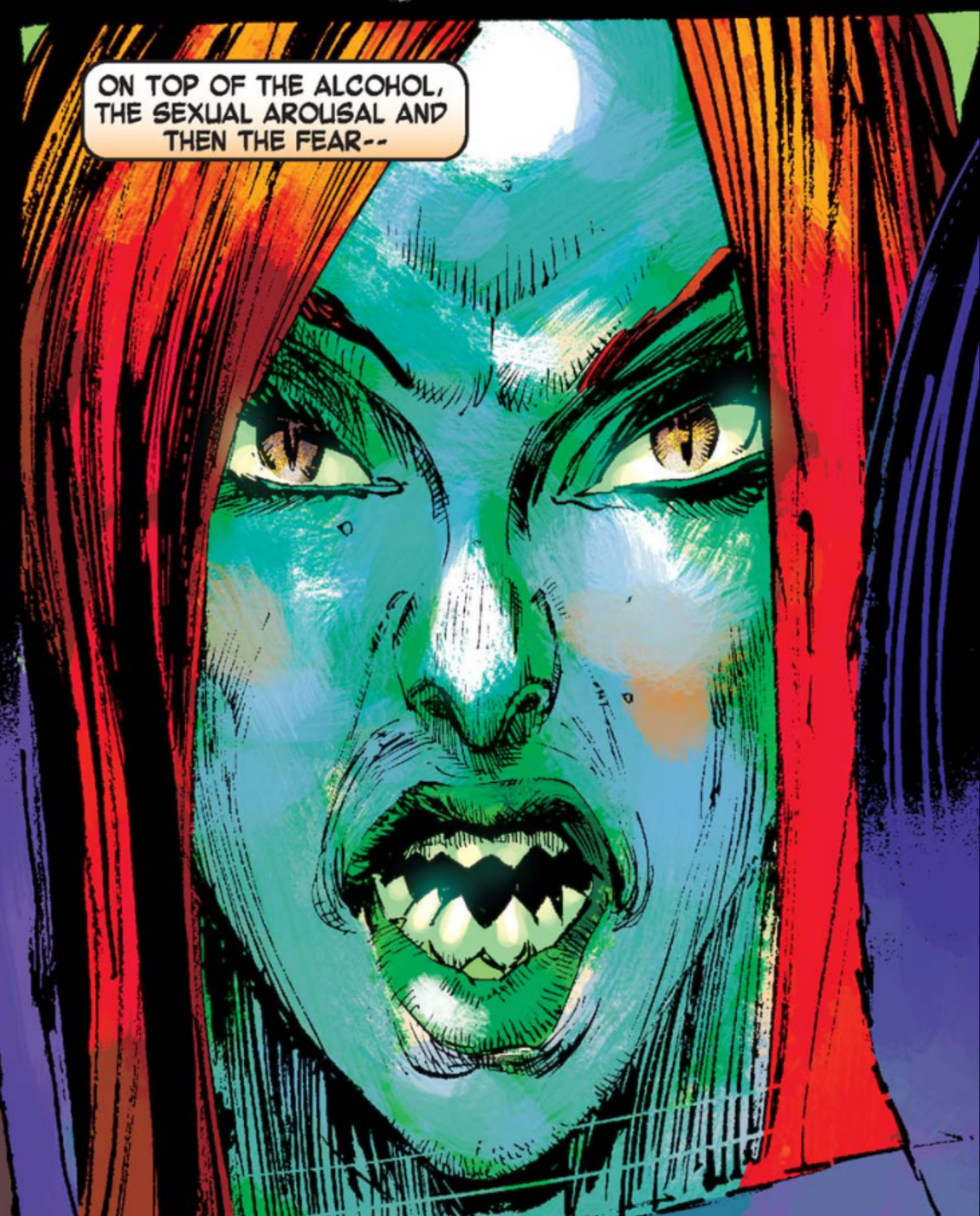
I WANT YOU TO TELL ME--

--EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR FRIENDS IN 2R.

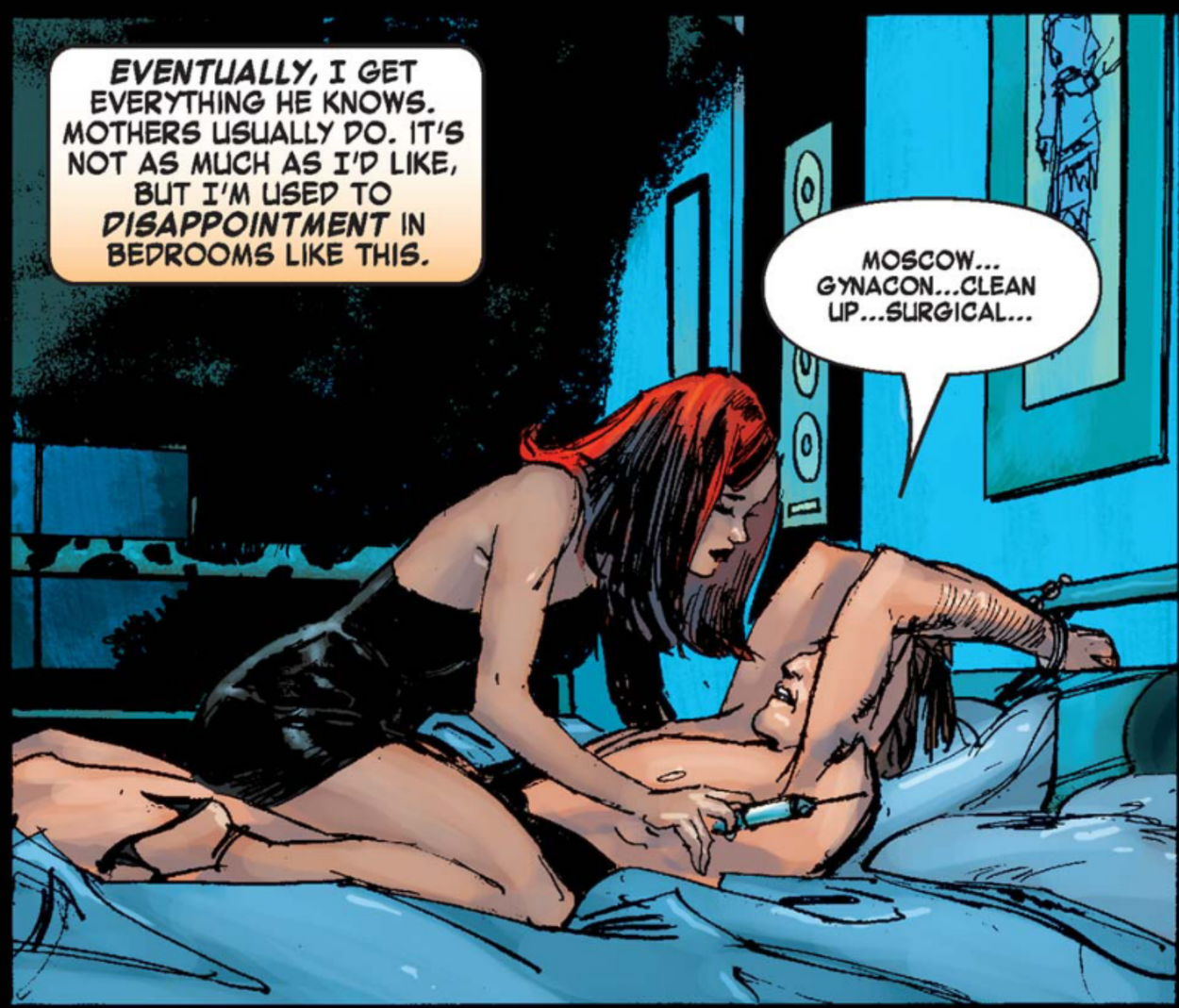
YOU LITTLE--
AH-AH. I'M THE ONE WITH THE KNIFE, MARTY. I'D KEEP A CIVIL TONGUE IN YOUR HEAD IF I WERE YOU. THAT WAY I WON'T BE TEMPTED TO REMOVE ANY EXTERNAL APPENDAGES.

NOW HOLD STILL, AND TRY NOT TO PANIC. I'M TRAINED TO HANDLE THIS STUFF. JUST A LITTLE PRICK AND YOU'LL WANT TO TELL ME EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW.

FERRIS IS YOUNGER AND HARDER THAN KOENIG, SO I'VE HAD TO GET EXTREME. THE DRUGS ARE A MAXED-UP COCKTAIL OF HALLUCINOGENS AND TELL-THE-TRUTH INCENTIVES.


ON TOP OF THE ALCOHOL, THE SEXUAL AROUSAL AND THEN THE FEAR--

--IT CAN'T BE VERY PLEASANT.
NO, PLEEEEEASE... AAAA!!!!!EEEEEE!!!!
--BUT IT SEEMS TO BE WORKING.
GOOOOOOOOD. NOW. EXSSSSSSSSPLAIN TO MEEEESH ABOUT THE RUSSSSSIANSSSS
MOMMMEEEEEEE... PLEA-EA-EA-EA-EASSSE...
THERE...IT'S ALL RIGHT, MARTY. I WON'T LET HER GET YOU. JUST TELL ME ABOUT YOUR GAMES WITH THE RUSSIAN BOYS.
BUT MOMMY. THEY SAID I MUSTN'T SAY--
NOW MARTY, YOU DON'T WANT HER TO COME BACK, DO YOU?
YOU DON'T WANT THAT, DOOOOOOO YOU?
NOOOOO, MOMMY, NOOOOO...
WELL, THEN. TELL ME ABOUT THE RUSSIAN BOYS...


EVENTUALLY, I GET EVERYTHING HE KNOWS. MOTHERS USUALLY DO. IT'S NOT AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE, BUT I'M USED TO DISAPPOINTMENT IN BEDROOMS LIKE THIS.
MOSCOW... GYNACON...CLEAN UP...SURGICAL...

I LEAVE HIM TO SLEEP IT OFF. SOMEONE'LL COME OVER AND CHECK WHEN HE DOESN'T SHOW UP FOR WORK TOMORROW MORNING.

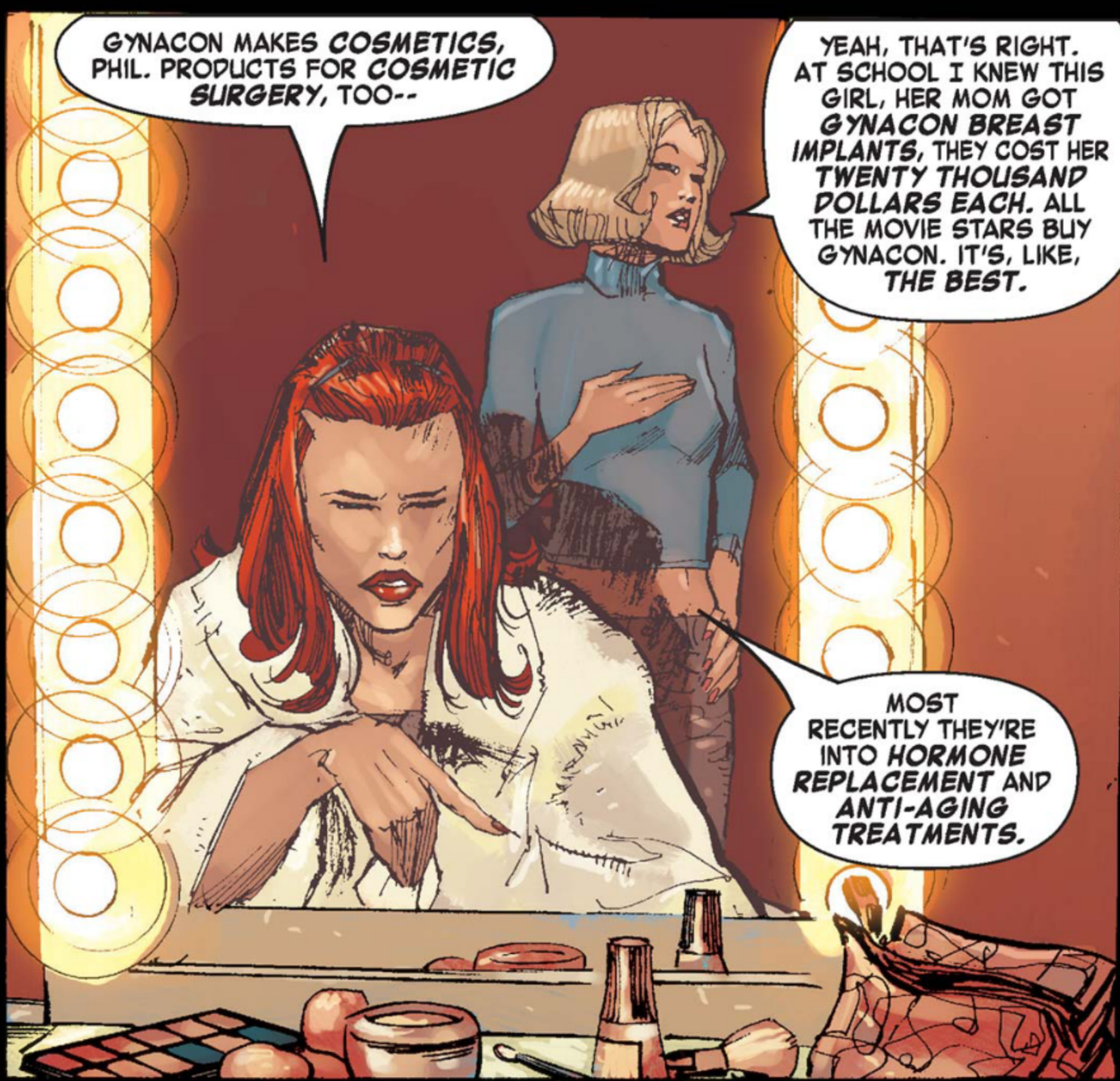
WON'T DO HIS REPUTATION ANY HARM WHEN THEY FIND HIM LIKE THIS.

NEVER DOES IF YOU'RE A GUY.

HEY BABY, YOU LOOKIN' FOR SOME?
HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA...
KNAAARP KNAAARP

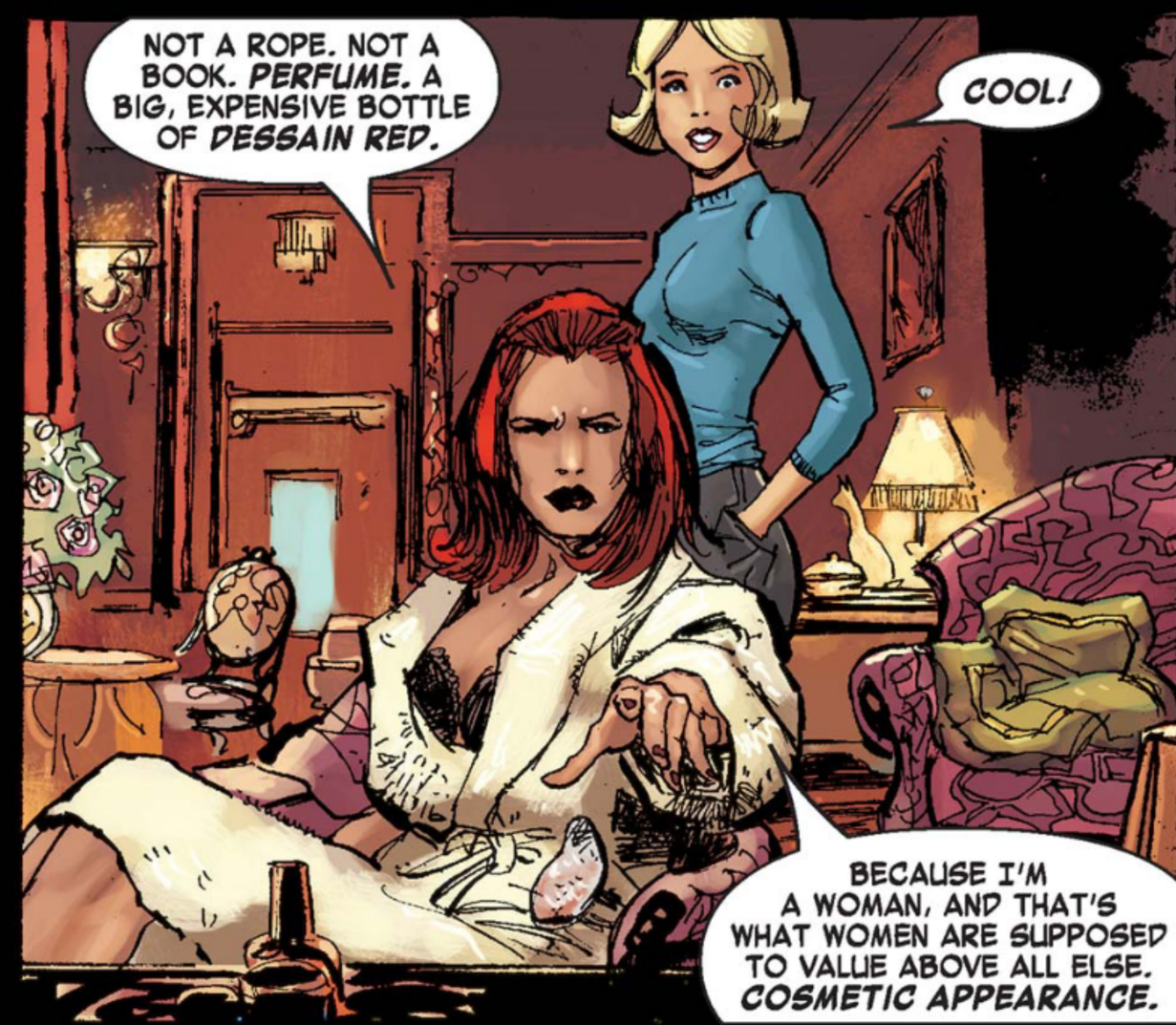
DESIGN RED
FROM
Gynacon
NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL A WOMAN

GYNACON? NEVER HEARD OF THEM.
OF COURSE YOU HAVEN'T-- YOU'RE A GUY.


GYNACON MAKES COSMETICS, PHIL. PRODUCTS FOR COSMETIC SURGERY, TOO--
YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT. AT SCHOOL I KNEW THIS GIRL, HER MOM GOT GYNACON BREAST IMPLANTS, THEY COST HER TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS EACH. ALL THE MOVIE STARS BUY GYNACON. IT'S, LIKE, THE BEST.
MOST RECENTLY THEY'RE INTO HORMONE REPLACEMENT AND ANTI-AGING TREATMENTS.

I DON'T SEE WHAT THIS HAS TO DO WITH ANYTHING IMPORTANT.
YES, THAT'S BECAUSE, AS SALLY ANNE OBSERVED, YOU'RE NOT A WOMAN. YOU'RE UNDER NO PRESSURE TO CARE ABOUT YOUR LOOKS OR YOUR APPEARANCE.

NAT, COME ON. YOU'RE NOT SAYING *YOU* CARE ABOUT *COSMETICS?*
NO, I PREFER TO SPEND MY MONEY ON *BOOKS* AND *CLIMBING GEAR.* BUT YOU KNOW WHAT THE LAST PRESENT WAS THAT SOMEONE BOUGHT ME?


NOT A ROPE. NOT A BOOK. *PERFUME.* A BIG, EXPENSIVE BOTTLE OF *DESSAIN RED.*
COOL!
BECAUSE I'M A WOMAN, AND THAT'S WHAT WOMEN ARE SUPPOSED TO VALUE ABOVE ALL ELSE. *COSMETIC APPEARANCE.*

WELL, *OKAY.* NEXT BIRTHDAY I'LL GET YOU SOME *DOSTOYEVSKY* AND A HUNDRED METERS OF *HEAVY DUTY LINE.* NONE OF THIS EXPLAINS WHAT *GYNACON* HAS TO DO WITH FERRIS AND HIS *NEW RUSSIAN PLAYMATES.*
FERRIS TOLD ME HE'S BEEN FACILITATING THE LIAISON BETWEEN *GYNACON* AND *2R.* HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING, BUT YOU WERE RIGHT. IT GOES BACK TO *RUSSIA.* I'VE GOT *MOSCOW ADDRESSES* AND SOME *GIBBERISH* ABOUT *A FIELD IN THE EAST.*

IT'S A *SAFE BET* STACY WHEEDLED THIS MEDUSAGEN OUT OF SOME OLD RED ROOM PAL OF HERS, TO HELP WITH THE PREGNANCY. THE QUESTION IS WHAT IT DOES. YOUR FRIENDS AT THE LAB GOT ANYTHING ON IT YET?

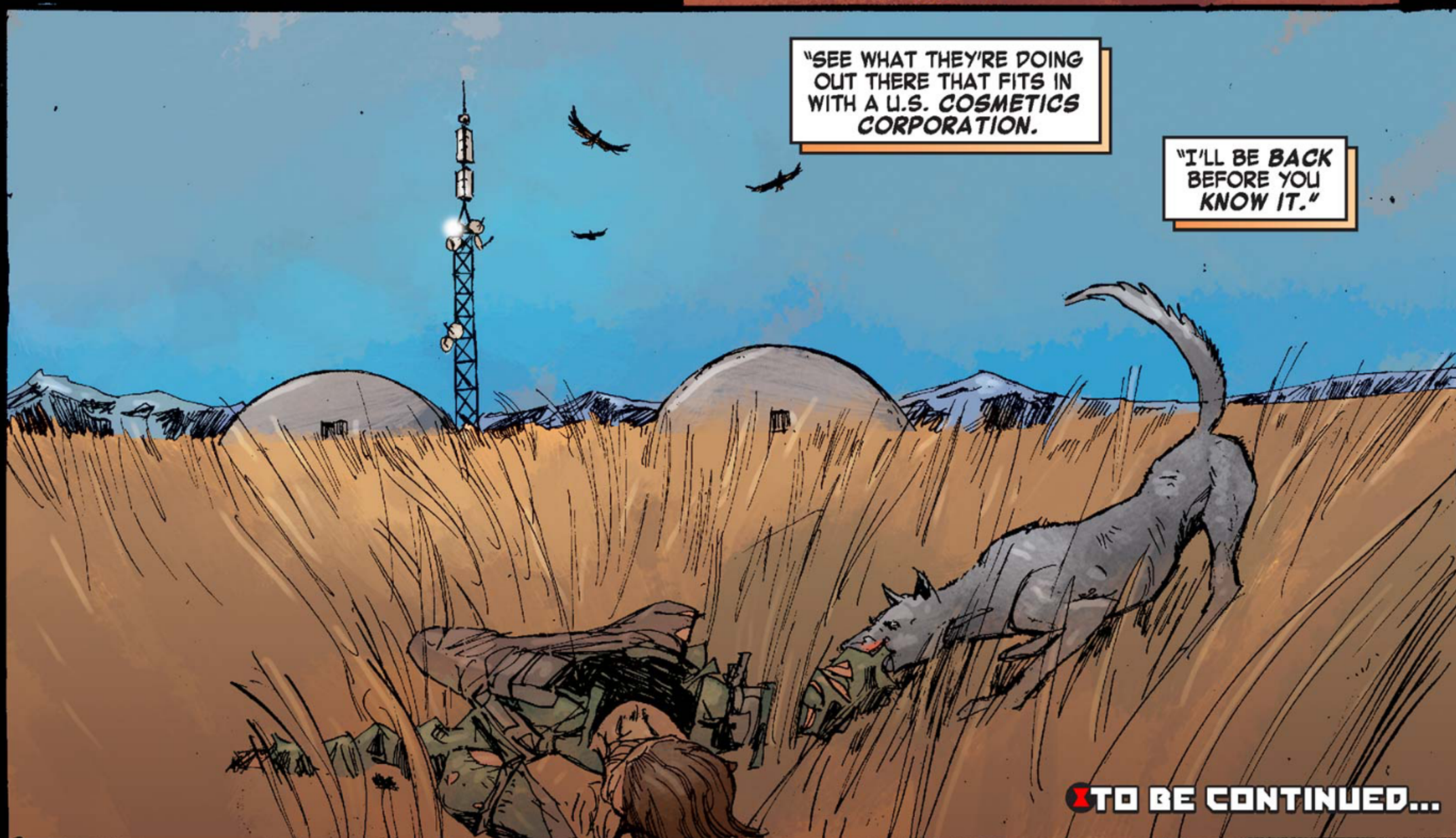
'FRAID NOT. ALL THEY CAN TELL ME IS THEY'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT BEFORE.
THEN I'M GOING TO HAVE TO *GO THERE.*

GO WHERE?
MOSCOW.

OOOH, CAN I COME?
NO!!!

AND ANYWAY, IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU WERE IN BED, YOUNG LADY. IT'S NEARLY THREE A.M.

ANYWAY, I'M NOT GOING TO BE GONE LONG. JUST FLY IN AND CHECK IT OUT. MAYBE FIND THIS FIELD IN THE EAST.


"SEE WHAT THEY'RE DOING OUT THERE THAT FITS IN WITH A U.S. COSMETICS CORPORATION.
"I'LL BE BACK BEFORE YOU KNOW IT."
TO BE CONTINUED...